

REQUEST FOR INITIAL PROPOSALS (RFIP)

Making Smart Growth Work: Streamlining Development and Regulatory Reform (REGREF-03)

OVERVIEW

EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division is seeking proposals from eligible organizations to provide assistance to localities and municipalities interested in addressing three important obstacles to smart growth development: 1) regulatory barriers, 2) development approval processes, and 3) development design review.

Communities across the nation are incorporating smart growth into their vision of the future. Concurrently, increasing numbers of developers are interested in building "smart growth communities." Yet in many cases, existing local laws, codes and policies conflict with the desire to create the walkable, dynamic developments that communities seek. Inflexible zoning codes, building codes, street standards and other regulations may act as barriers to smart growth. For instance, local regulations may prohibit developments with mixed uses, narrow streets, buildings closer to the streets, or smaller lot sizes. A developer interested in creating a site design incorporating some of these features would likely undergo a longer development approval process, incur higher costs, and face more financial risk. In other places, the regulations may allow smart growth, but smart developments may be hindered by prolonged approval processes with multiple approval points and unclear standards. Further difficulties may arise when localities want smart growth but lack the site design expertise to effectively participate in local public/private development projects.

Such development dynamics can make smart growth harder to accomplish. Assisting interested localities to evaluate and update their development codes or policies, consolidate their development approval processes, or review a particular site design can help them integrate smart growth principles into their current and future development plans.

EPA is seeking proposals from eligible organizations to provide multi-disciplinary assistance for four to eight communities under the first year of a multi-year assistance agreement. The applicant will partner with EPA to design and implement a method for selecting localities to be assisted. The assistance will be targeted towards localities showing significant desire to implement smart growth. Selected localities will be assisted by a team of experts assembled to provide recommendations and advice to local officials on how to encourage smart growth with their development process, codes and regulations. Each locality will receive assistance related to one of three major issues impacting smart growth development at the local level:

- 1) regulatory barriers in local development codes and/or planning policies,
- 2) uncertain development approval processes that increase cost and financial risk, or

3) lack of expertise in development design practices which support local smart growth goals.

BACKGROUND

U.S. EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division (Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation) focuses on smart growth issues of regional and national significance. Smart growth development practices support national environmental goals by protecting sensitive habitats and watersheds, minimizing water quality impacts from development, reducing air emissions by increasing transportation choices and reducing heat island effects, and encouraging cleanup and sustainable redevelopment of Brownfields.

Smart growth is development that serves the economy, the community, public health and the environment. Smart growth is often characterized by a common set of development principles:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

WHO IS ELIGIBLE

Eligible applicants are incorporated nonprofit (or not for profit) agencies, institutions, and organizations incorporated or domiciled in the United States. Applicants must be located in, and project activities must be conducted within, the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the United States. Nonprofit organizations described in section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. For profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

EPA is seeking proposals under which the applicant would provide assistance to four to eight localities or municipalities interested in improving their regulatory framework, development approval process, and/or site design review in ways that support smart growth. It is expected that the applicant would use multi-disciplinary teams to provide this assistance and that four to eight communities would be assisted each year the assistance agreement is funded. Applicants should propose a method for selecting localities/municipalities for assistance; this method should include substantial involvement by EPA. Eligible activities include but are not limited to:

- audits of existing regulations or development codes to remove barriers and recommend incentives for smart growth;
- evaluation of existing development review processes to ensure timely, fair, predictable, low risk/cost approval of smart growth developments;
- expert review of proposed site designs and facilitation of the site design review process to ensure high quality development and strong public participation.

Examples of specific activities might include, but would not be limited to:

- Professional design review assistance to ensure that proposed development plans incorporate local smart growth goals.
- Review of zoning ordinances, landscape requirements, subdivision ordinances, development standards and guidelines to ensure consistency with local smart growth goals.
- Facilitation of workshops with neighborhood residents to build their understanding of smart growth principles related to potential development for their community or neighborhood.
- Technical support to provide advice and recommendations on revising and updating zoning codes and regulations to incorporate smart growth policies and principles.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Proposals must be received by EPA through the mail or by hand delivery (e.g., via courier, UPS, or Federal Express) no later than 5pm East Coast time Tuesday, April 29th, 2003. Applicants must submit an original and 4 copies of their proposal package. Fax and e-mail submissions will not be accepted. Proposals received after the due date will not be considered. Please see the sections on "Proposal Contents" and "Where to Get More Information" for important additional details.

Following selection, applicants will be required to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., federal form SF 424 and associated documentation) and a detailed workplan. These items should not be provided with the initial proposal. Applicants should be aware that there will be a very quick turnaround required if they are asked to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., within four weeks or less after contacted by EPA after the initial selection process).

All applicants should be aware that formal requests for assistance may be subject to intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372, *Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs*. Both proposals and formal requests for funding are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This means that anyone can request, and receive,

copies of them. Applicants should clearly mark information they consider confidential and EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with agency regulations (40 CFR part 2, subpart B.).

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Proposals must include a cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, and documentation of multi-disciplinary teams. Project descriptions should not exceed 10 pages (see below for additional details). The following format is required:

1. Cover letter (does not count against page limit)

The cover letter used to submit your proposal must be signed by an official with the authority to commit your organization to the project and should be written on your organization's official letterhead.

2. Summary Information Page (does not count against page limit)

The summary information page should be one-page long and include the following information:

- the title and number of this RFIP (i.e., Making Smart Growth Work: Streamlining Development and Regulatory Reform - REGREF-03)
- project title and location
- applicant name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address
- name and title of project contact (including how to reach if different from above)
- type of applicant organization (e.g. nonprofit)
- summary budget information (amount requested from EPA; amount and source of any matching funds)
- 5 to 10 line abstract of proposal

3. Project Description (no longer than 10 page sides)

The project description must provide a concise overview of the project and include a preliminary workplan outlining the project's major tasks, products, and timetable. The narrative must also address how the proposal meets the selection criteria. If other project partners or funding sources are involved, their role and contribution must be defined. In reviewing the project description, reviewers will not consider any pages over the 10 page limit. The project description must be no longer than five pages double sided, or 10 pages single sided, must use no smaller than 10 point type and should have page margins all-around of at least one inch.

4. Budget (does not count against page limit)

The project budget should include personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and other. If not self-evident, entries under each category should be explained in the budget itself or in the project description.

5. Documentation of Qualifications (does not count against page limit)

The applicant must include short bios of all principle staff who will have a major role in

the project. Bios must specifically address each individual's experience with smart growth issues. If multi-disciplinary teams with members from other organizations are participating, their bios must be included as well.

6. Documentation of Multi-Disciplinary Team (does not count against page limit)

If the applicant is including other organizations as part of the project team, the application must include letters from the partners stating their intention to work on the project. These letters must be on the partner's letterhead and signed by a responsible official of the partner organization. These letters must be included in the application package and must not be sent separate from the package.

BUDGET REQUEST AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

EPA expects to have approximately \$200K available for proposals under this RFIP for this funding cycle; this is subject to availability of funding within the agency's final FY 03 budget. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for first-year activities for approximately \$200K or less. Final grants may be negotiated for budget and project periods of from three to four years, with funding for future years dependent on funding availability, agency priorities and applicant performance. Applicants should provide detailed descriptions of the activities proposed for the first-year under this competition, as well as a description of what follow-up activities would be conducted in subsequent years if additional funding is available. A ceiling of approximately \$600K for three year agreements, and \$800K for four year agreements, is suggested. EPA expects to award approximately one assistance agreement under this RFIP.

There are no match or cost-sharing requirements. However the degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and/or leverages other funds will be considered as an evaluation criterion. Matching funds can include cash or in-kind contributions. Any dollars counted towards a match must be for costs that EPA can fund. Allowable costs for nonprofit organizations are defined in OMB circular A-122; allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A-87.

SELECTION CRITERIA

A proposal must meet the following threshold criteria to be considered:

Threshold Criterion 1: Smart Growth Focus

The proposal must embody, result in, or encourage smart growth. The proposal must focus on the issues, subjects, and activities targeted by this RFIP and explained in the "Overview," "Background" and "Activities Eligible for Funding" sections. The proposal must clearly demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the smart growth issues addressed by the project, and the applicant must clearly demonstrate expertise in smart growth issues. EPA will use the smart growth definition outlined in the background section to apply this criterion.

Threshold Criterion 2: Allowable Activities

The project must consist of activities authorized under one or more of the following EPA

grant authorities: Clean Air Act section 103 (b)(3); Clean Water Act section 104 (b) (3); Solid Waste Disposal Act section 8001, as amended; Toxic Substances Control Act section 10; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act section 20, as supplemented by P.L.106-74; and Safe Drinking Water Act sections 1442 (a) and (c). Most of the statutes authorize grants for research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies. The project activities must advance the state of knowledge or transfer information. The term "demonstrations" can encompass the first instance of the pollution control or prevention technique, or an innovative application of a previously used method. The term "research" may include the application of established practices when they contribute to learning about an environmental concept or problem.

Threshold Criterion 3: Environmental Focus

In order to be funded, the project's general focus must be one that is specified in the statutes listed above. For most of the statutes, a project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air, water, or solid/hazardous waste pollution, or, in the case of grants under the Toxic Substances Control Act or the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, to "carrying out the purposes of the Act." The overarching focus must be on the statutory purpose of the applicable grant authority, in most cases "to prevent or control pollution." In light of this, proposals relating to topics which are sometimes included within the term "environment" such as recreation, conservation, restoration, or habitat protection should describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

Threshold Criterion 4: Serve a Public Purpose

Projects should be of primary benefit to the applicant organization and the public at large. Proposed projects should clearly and directly support the applicant organization's overall mission and long-term goals.

The threshold criteria will be applied on a pass/fail basis. Proposals which fail any one of the threshold criteria will not be considered further.

Evaluation factors:

If a proposal meets the threshold criteria, it will then be evaluated against the following factors:

1. Potential impact of the project and likelihood of success.
2. Degree to which the applicant and any multi-disciplinary teams partnering on the project demonstrate smart growth expertise and experience.
3. Degree to which the proposing organization is an appropriate representative for the issues dealt with in the assistance agreement, is likely to be viewed as an authority on the subject, or is partnering with an organization that meets these requirements.

4. Degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and/or leverages matching funds.
5. Degree to which the project approach or findings are replicable, serve as a learning tool, and will be disseminated to appropriate audiences.
6. Degree to which the evaluation system which the proposing organization will use to identify communities for assistance enables a focus on communities showing significant smart growth initiative.

Proposals will be scored high, medium or low against each of the evaluation factors using a numerical scale of 1 through 5. Factors 1, 2 and 6 will be given higher weight than factors 3 through 5.

OTHER FACTORS

EPA will carefully consider the applicant's past performance administering federal financial assistance and carrying out projects supported by EPA and other federal agencies. This may include the results of audits conducted by EPA's Office of Inspector General, other federal agencies, or state, local or tribal oversight entities. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their performance history in their proposals and to provide contacts for EPA to obtain additional information. In making final selections, factors such as overall excellence, geographic diversity, project diversity, and applicant diversity (i.e., type of organization) may also be considered.

Any disputes regarding funding decisions will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR Part 30 or 31, depending on the applicant. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.

AWARD MECHANISM

This solicitation falls under Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance No. 66.611, Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants, authorized under Delegation of Authority I-47.

EPA expects to use new cooperative agreements to fund approved projects. Cooperative agreements entail substantial federal involvement in the project. Such involvement may include EPA review and approval of project scope and phases; EPA participation in and collaboration on, various phases of the work; EPA review of all draft and final products; regular e-mail, phone, and conference calls; and/or EPA involvement in selection of key recipient personnel.

WHERE AND WHEN TO APPLY

You must submit one original and 4 copies of your full proposal (your full proposal includes the cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, and, if applicable, documentation of multi-disciplinary

teams as described under the section entitled "Proposal Contents"). Please note that the delivery address varies depending on whether you are mailing your proposal or arranging for hand delivery.

If you are sending your proposal via hand delivery (e.g., Federal Express, Courier, UPS), send it to:

Deloris Swann
Development, Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
1301 Constitution Avenue N.W.
EPA West, Room 1408 C
Washington, D.C. 20004

If you are mailing your proposal, send it to:

Deloris Swann
Development, Community and Environment Division
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
mail code 1808T
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Please also note that there may be substantial delays in mail service to EPA, due to heightened security requirements. Proposals must be received by EPA by 5pm east coast time Tuesday, April 29th, 2003. No late proposals will be accepted. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. Postmarks or meters will not be considered sufficient documentation of on-time delivery.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Applicants with questions about this solicitation should contact:

Carlton Eley
U.S. EPA Development, Community and Environment Division
202-566-2841
eley.carlton@epa.gov

OR

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Answers to frequently asked questions will be posted on the EPA web site at www.epa.gov/smartgrowth. The only pre-application assistance available under this competition will be related to clarifying the requirements of the RFIP.

AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recipients will be notified of who received an award through a posting of award recipients on the EPA smart growth website (www.epa.gov/smartgrowth). This information will be posted 30 days after EPA's Grants Administration Division issues a written offer of award to each recipient. Awards are expected to be made sometime in the Fall of 2003.

2/26/03